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**STATE LANDS IN THE WESTERN PROVINCES OF THE RUSSIAN
EMPIRE AFTER THE EMANCIPATION REFORM OF 1861:
SELECTIVE LAND POLICY AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE
SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF LANDOWNERS.**

Summary. *The article examines the state policy of the Russian Empire towards state (kazennye) lands in the nine Western provinces after the Emancipation Reform of 1861, against the background of the conflict between the imperial government and the Polish nobility. Drawing on a legal analysis of the Instruction of 23 July 1865, related imperial acts and the 1887 land survey data, the study traces how mechanisms of state-land sales, debt confiscations and preferential credit were used to redistribute land selectively in favour of the “Russian element” and to create a service-based stratum of landowners. The article argues that state land was transformed from an economic resource into an instrument of social engineering and depolonisation: while the rights of Polish and Jewish owners were restricted, a loyal “middle class” of bureaucratic landholders—financially and administratively dependent on the imperial authorities—was purposefully constructed.*

Key words: *state (kazennye) lands, Western provinces, Russian Empire, selective land policy, depolonisation, Polish nobility, service-based*

landownership, 1887 land survey statistics, Instruction of 23 July 1865, social engineering.

Problem Statement. The imperial policy of the Russian Empire towards the Western provinces in the second half of the nineteenth century has long attracted scholarly attention, yet most studies focus on political, national and confessional aspects of regional integration, while the state land fund is treated only marginally. Historians usually analyse the transformation of estate institutions, judicial and administrative reforms, and the position of the Polish nobility and Ukrainian peasantry, whereas land policy is described mainly as an auxiliary instrument of depolonisation through confiscations, restrictions on land purchase and discriminatory procedures of noble status confirmation.

Within this framework, there is a marked lack of specialised research that would treat state (*kazennye*) lands in the Western provinces as an autonomous object of study, taking into account the internal legal differentiation of this fund, the mechanisms of its formation (from the allotment of state peasants to the confiscation of Polish estates) and the procedures of alienation under the Instruction of 23 July 1865. Insufficiently explored is the question of how legal norms, credit instruments and practices of debt confiscation interacted in creating a new, service-dependent stratum of landowners and in reshaping the social structure of the countryside.

The absence of a synthetic study that combines a detailed legal analysis of the regulations on state lands with a quantitative examination of the 1887 land survey data prevents a full assessment of the role of the state land fund as a tool of imperial social engineering. This gap underlines the need for a dedicated investigation that would treat state lands in the Western provinces not as a background element, but as a key resource of the policy of selective loyalty, depolonisation and administrative control over the region.

Research Methodology. The research methodology combines legal analysis, quantitative reconstruction and approaches drawn from the history of empires. Legal analysis is applied to the Instruction of 23 July 1865 and related imperial acts (ukases, regulations, circulars), which makes it possible to reconstruct the logic of the special regime of state lands in the Western provinces and to identify the selective mechanisms governing different social and national groups’ access to the state land fund.

The quantitative approach is based on the processing of land-survey and cadastral statistics, above all the 1887 land investigation, using structural indicators (shares of land categories, size of estates, level of tenancy) to compare normative prescriptions with the actual transformation of landownership. A comparative-regional perspective allows the Western provinces to be contrasted with other regions of the empire and reveals the asymmetry of imperial policy towards “unreliable” territories.

Interpretatively, the study relies on concepts of social engineering and imperial/colonial power, which enables state lands to be treated not merely as an economic resource but as an instrument of political control, depolonisation and the construction of a new, service-dependent stratum of landowners. A critical analysis of Ukrainian, Polish and Western historiography is used to delineate the research gap and to substantiate the novelty of bringing legal and statistical materials together within a single analytical framework.

Analysis of Recent Studies and Publications. An analysis of recent studies and publications shows that the historiography of the Russian Empire’s policy towards the Western provinces is extensive but thematically asymmetric. Western scholarship tends to view the region primarily as a space of prolonged conflict between the imperial government and the Polish elite; land policy is interpreted within the framework of national and confessional strategies (confiscations, restrictions on land purchase, legal barriers for Catholic nobles),

while the state land fund is mentioned only in passing, without a focused examination of its structure or the consequences of its alienation.

In Ukrainian historiography, the emphasis lies on the political and legal integration of Right-Bank Ukraine and the Western provinces into the empire, on judicial and administrative reforms, and on confessional policy; land issues usually appear as background to these processes, with no detailed treatment of state lands. A separate corpus of works in social and agrarian history intensively employs zemstvo descriptions and land statistics but concentrates on peasant allotments, private landed estates and tenancy relations, leaving the legal regime of the state land fund largely unexplored.

Polish and broader Western studies of the kresy interpret imperial land policy as a form of colonial practice aimed at undermining the economic base of Polish elites, yet they mostly address private-law aspects (the fate of estates, the status of the nobility) and rarely consider state lands as a distinct segment of property. Related research on the incorporation of the Belarusian-Lithuanian and Ukrainian nobility into the Russian nobility demonstrates how land rights were used as an instrument of political disciplining, but again pays little attention to the mechanisms of redistributing the state land fund.

Overall, current literature does not offer a synthetic study that would combine a detailed legal analysis of the Instruction of 23 July 1865 and associated acts with a quantitative examination of the 1887 land survey data on the structure of landownership in the Western provinces. This marginal position of the state land fund in existing works and the absence of such an integrated approach define the relevance and novelty of the article in question.

Statement of the Article's Objectives. The aim of the article is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the agrarian reforms of 1864 in the Western provinces of the Russian Empire, in particular in Right-Bank Ukraine (the Kyiv, Podillia and Volhynia provinces), on the basis of twelve imperial ukases (nos. 9–20), by identifying the mechanisms of their implementation, assessing their

economic, social and political consequences, and evaluating their significance through comparison with reforms in other regions of the empire and with European analogues.

Presentation of the Main Research Material. The historiography of studies on the Russian Empire's state policy towards the Western Governorates (Gubernias) in the second half of the 19th century is quite diverse. However, it clearly outlines a shift in focus from purely political issues to socio-economic and national-confessional problems, with an almost complete absence of specialized studies dedicated specifically to state-owned lands (*kazennye zemli*) and the mechanisms of their sale in this region.

In Western historiography, the Western Governorates are primarily viewed as an arena of prolonged conflict between the Russian government and the Polish elite, which particularly escalated after the 1863–1864 Uprising. Works dedicated to Polish-Russian relations in the "Western provinces" during the second half of the 19th century emphasize that the imperial authorities consistently sought to weaken the economic standing of Polish landownership, limit its political influence, and simultaneously integrate the region into the general imperial space by changing the legal regime of land ownership.

Furthermore, land policy is predominantly described as an integral part of the national and confessional strategy—implemented through confiscations, prohibition of land purchase for specific groups, and the creation of legal barriers for the Catholic nobility. In contrast, the state land fund and the special regulatory acts concerning its alienation are mentioned only in passing, without a systematic analysis of their structural features and socio-economic consequences [30].

Ukrainian historiography of imperial policy in Right-Bank Ukraine and the broader area of the Western Governorates traditionally focuses primarily on the political and legal aspects of integrating these territories into the Russian Empire, the transformation of estate institutions, the evolution of the judicial and

administrative systems, as well as confessional policy regarding the Roman Catholic and Uniate populations.

Studies dedicated to the functioning of the district and principal courts in the Right-Bank Governorates and imperial judicial policy emphasize that the judicial and administrative reforms were viewed by the government as a tool to control the local nobility (shliakhta), restrict its corporate autonomy, and gradually displace it from positions of power.

At the same time, in these studies, regional land policy—including the circulation of estates, the status of confiscated properties (dobra), and the specifics of the legal regime of state and appanage lands—usually serves merely as a backdrop for political and legal processes, while the analysis of the state land fund (kazennyy zemel'nyy fond) itself and the mechanisms of its realization remains outside the main focus [21, pp. 50–64.].

A separate direction in Ukrainian studies concerns the social history of the peasantry in Right-Bank Ukraine and the Western Governorates in general following the 1861 reform, where researchers focus on the problems of land shortage (malozemel'ya), lease relations, peasant migration, and adaptation to market conditions.

These works widely utilize statistical materials from the second half of the 19th century, including Zemstvo surveys and land statistics, which record the structure of landownership, the ratio of different land categories, and the nature of land use. However, the analysis of this data is primarily built around peasant allotments, privately-owned noble property, and the development of leasing.

The regime of state-owned lands (kazennye zemli) is usually examined in the most general terms—as one of the elements of the state fund, without revealing its internal legal differentiation, intended purpose, or the specifics of its management in the Western Governorates compared to other regions of the Empire [15].

Significant contributions to the coverage of imperial policy in the Right-Bank have also been made by studies dedicated to the national movement, Polish-Ukrainian relations, and confessional policy, where the land issue is viewed as one of the key dimensions of the confrontation among the imperial authorities, the Polish nobility (shliakhta), and the Ukrainian peasantry.

Works analyzing the status of Polish landownership in Dnieper Ukraine emphasize that following the suppression of the 1863–1864 Uprising, the Russian government consistently applied a complex of legal restrictions aimed at the depolonisation of property: a ban on land purchases for a segment of the Polish nobility, the complication of the procedure for confirming nobility, and the establishment of a regime of "undesirable" landownership for Catholic proprietors, among others.

These works particularly emphasize the political nature of the agrarian decisions of the authorities in the Western Governorates. However, the question of how the mechanism for the sale of state-owned lands (kazennye zemli) under special instructions was integrated into this policy usually remains an open one [23].

Polish and broader Western historiography, which examines the experience of Polish landowners in the "Eastern Borderlands" (kresy), offers an interpretation of the Russian Empire's land policy as a form of colonial practice aimed at undermining the economic basis of the Polish elites and reshaping the social structure of the countryside.

Studies dedicated to the status of Poles in the Western Governorates in the second half of the 19th century demonstrate that the mechanisms of confiscation, sequestration, prohibition of land purchase, and complication of inheritance procedures created a specific legal regime of "risky" landownership for Polish proprietors, while groups loyal to the Empire received preferences.

At the same time, the source researcher readily notes that such works primarily focus on private law relations (the fate of estates, the status of the

nobility, the possibilities of preserving ancestral holdings), whereas state-owned lands (kazennye zemli), as a separate body of state property, are mentioned in passing and do not become the subject of dedicated analysis [29].

Closely related to the subject of our research are also studies examining imperial policy toward the nobility (shliakhta) of the Belarusian-Lithuanian and Ukrainian lands in the context of its incorporation into the Russian dvoryanstvo, discussing the limitation of rights for a part of the Polish nobility, the confiscation and compulsory sale of estates, and the change in land tenure conditions for "untrustworthy" groups. These works consistently show how legal innovations concerning the land rights of the nobility became a tool of political subjugation and social engineering, which manifested particularly strongly after the crises of 1830–1831 and 1863–1864. At the same time, here too, the focus remains on private Polish landownership, rather than on the fate of the state-owned fund and the specific mechanisms through which the state redistributed its land resources in favor of "trustworthy" population groups [20].

A separate line of research concerns land statistics and cadastral surveys of the second half of the 19th century, which are widely used as a source base for studying the structure of landownership, land use, forms of lease, and the dynamics of agrarian indicators. Publications similar in type to the "Main Data on Land Statistics according to the 1887 Survey" ("Glavneyshimi dannymi pozemel'noy statistiki po obsledovaniyu 1887 goda") contain detailed tables recording the distribution of land among different categories of owners, the share of arable land, meadows, pastures, forests, the size of holdings, the volume of leased areas, and so forth. Researchers actively draw upon these materials to reconstruct agrarian processes both in the center and on the periphery of the Empire. However, despite the significant potential of these sources, specialized works that correlate land statistics data specifically with the legal regime of state-owned lands in the Western Governorates, and particularly with the Instruction

of July 23, 1865, virtually do not exist today, which opens up the opportunity for a new interpretation of long-published statistical arrays [14].

Finally, in the scholarly literature that directly addresses state-owned lands (kazennye zemli) and the state land policy of the Russian Empire, attention is primarily focused on general imperial aspects: the evolution of the concept of state property, the distinctions among state, appanage, and departmental lands, the role of the state fund in the budgetary system, as well as the activities of specialized land banks that provided credit to noble and peasant landownership.

These works outline the general trends of reduction in the share of state-owned lands within the structure of property, and the growing role of credit and leasing. However, the spatial-regional perspective, specifically related to the Western Governorates, is largely absent or presented in an overly general manner.

Particularly noticeable is the lack of detailed analysis of specific regulatory acts, especially the Instruction of July 23, 1865, on the procedure for the sale of state-owned lands in the Western Governorates, which established specific rules for access to the state land fund for determined social and national population groups [14].

Thus, despite a significant number of works on the Russian Empire’s policy in the Western Governorates, the national question, the status of the Polish nobility, and peasant agrarian evolution, historiography has virtually failed to produce a specialized study that would combine in a single analytical field: the legal analysis of the Instruction of July 23, 1865, as the key act regulating the sale of state-owned lands in the Western Krai, and the quantitative analysis of the landownership structure based on the materials of the 1887 Land Survey in this region.

The absence of such a synthetic work, as well as the marginal place of the state land fund in most studies dedicated to the Western Governorates, substantiate the scientific novelty of focusing precisely on the correlation

between the legal regime of state-owned lands and the statistically recorded results of its implementation at the end of the 19th century [29].

Following the Peasant Reform of 1861, the Western Governorates of the Russian Empire found themselves under a special legal regime that combined general imperial norms with a number of specific decisions, conditioned both by the legacy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Rzeczpospolita) and the consequences of the 1863–1864 Uprising.

Unlike many internal governorates, where the government generally aimed for a gradual equalization of the status and legal forms of landownership, the agrarian policy in the Western Krai was consciously "skewed" in favor of the peasantry and the "Russian" element, while simultaneously limiting the ability of the Polish nobility (shliakhta) and Catholic proprietors to retain and expand their estates.

This created a specific balance between the policy of emancipation and the policy of depolonisation, in which land relations served as a key leverage point for the imperial strategy [22].

Legally, the 1861 Peasant Reform in the Western Governorates included a number of "pro-peasant" correctives compared to the general imperial provisions: reduced redemption payments, a more favorable determination of allotment sizes, and the retention by peasants of certain lands that were transferred to landowners as "cut-offs" (otrezki) in other regions.

Studies indicate that the government deliberately delayed the final liquidation of peasant obligations and supported traditional forms of land use in order to weaken the economic positions of Polish landowners, while simultaneously demonstrating the "care" of the Emperor to the peasantry. This policy meant that the formally general imperial norms of emancipation acquired a different meaning in the Western Governorates: the peasants' right to land here served not only as a social but also as a political tool to counterbalance the Polish nobility (shliakhta) [24].

Following the 1863–1864 Uprising, the status of the Polish element in the Western Krai was significantly restricted by specific legislative acts, primarily concerning land rights. For a segment of Polish landowners, prohibitions or significant complications were introduced regarding the purchase of new estates, the re-registration of property rights, and participation in auctions for confiscated or state-owned lands, while the state created more favorable access conditions to the land market for "Russian" buyers.

In this context, the formula concerning the "foreign" element encompassed not only non-Russian ethnic groups but also confessionally defined communities (primarily Polish Catholics), for whom the legal regime of landownership was deliberately complicated, whereas the Orthodox peasantry and settlers from internal governorates were viewed as desirable carriers of "Russian" influence [27].

A distinct feature of the legal status of the Western Governorates was also the fact that specific regulations concerning the status of the peasantry and the nobility were maintained here for a considerably longer period, as the government did not rush to unify them with the internal governorates.

Studies indicate that the government deliberately maintained certain forms of peasant dependence and restrictions on peasant mobility to prevent the rapid release of labor and simultaneously weaken the economic resources of Polish estates.

At the same time, at the level of political declarations, the Western Krai was viewed as an object of gradual "merging" with other regions of the Empire through the introduction of unified institutions (Zemstvos, Land Captains (Zemsky nachal'niki), unified judicial and administrative structures), which created constant tension between the special regime and the tendency toward formal equalization.

In the general imperial system of land relations, state-owned lands (kazennye zemli) constituted one of the basic categories of state property, distinct

from appanage (udel'nye), departmental (vedomstvennye), and privately-owned noble holdings.

By their legal nature, state-owned lands were properties belonging to the state as a public entity, rather than personally to the monarch. Their formation is linked to the process of separating state property from the demesne holdings of the ruling dynasty, which culminated in the codification within the "Code of Statutes on State Administration" (Svod ustavov kazennogo upravleniya) in 1832.

The state fund included lands acquired through territorial expansion (including in the Baltic region, Poland, and the Caucasus), as well as lands confiscated from church institutions after secularization, and "escheated" holdings (vymorochnye—land without heirs), which gave this fund a distinctly "composite" character [28].

State-owned lands (kazennye zemli) were utilized by the state multi-functionally: as a source of fiscal revenue (through sales, leasing, and taxes), as a reserve for colonization projects (settlement of peasants, Cossacks, and migrants from internal governorates), and also as a tool of social policy, specifically by granting land allotments to certain categories of civil servants, retired military personnel, and others.

As of the beginning of the 20th century, the state fund, according to researchers' estimates, encompassed over a third of the entire area of the Empire. While its share in the European part was smaller, it remained significant, making it an important factor in agrarian evolution.

In the Western Governorates, this fund possessed an additional political meaning: it included both lands historically belonging to the state and estates confiscated from Polish and Catholic owners, which were transformed into a resource for supporting "loyal" population groups.

Alongside state-owned lands (kazennye zemli), the imperial system included appanage (udel'nye) and departmental (vedomstvennye) funds, which were managed by separate institutions (the Appanage Department, ministries'

departments, church structures), as well as private noble and peasant allotments formed as a result of the peasant reform.

Appanage lands provided the material base for the imperial family, differing from state-owned lands by a higher degree of departmental autonomy, whereas private noble holdings remained the foundation of the nobility's estate-based economy.

Peasant allotments, which emerged after 1861, formally assigned arable lands, meadows, and pastures to the communes. Still, they were subject to the redemption payments regime and the internal communal redistribution system, which limited their full market transferability [24].

In this multi-layered landscape, state-owned lands served as a flexible instrument of state policy: they could be leased, sold on preferential terms, granted as service allotments, or, conversely, withdrawn from circulation and reserved for future strategic objectives.

That is why, in the Western Governorates, where the agrarian question was closely intertwined with the national, confessional, and security dimensions, the state fund acquired special significance as a resource for the targeted redistribution of land in favor of the "Russian" and peasant elements and as a means of restraining the economic influence of the Polish nobility (shliakhta).

This context led to the appearance of special regulatory acts, particularly the Instruction of July 23, 1865, on the procedure for the sale of state-owned lands in the Western Governorates, which combined general imperial principles of state fund management with the regional specifics of the policy toward the Polish and "foreign" population [24].

The Western Governorates—a territory encompassing the Vilna, Kovno, Grodno, Minsk, Vitebsk, Mogilev, Kyiv, Podolia, and Volhynia Governorates—were placed under a special legal regime starting from the early 1860s. The government's understanding of this regional specificity was already formulated in the explanatory note to the Regulation of March 5, 1864, concerning privileges

in land purchase in the Western Krai: "The events of the last two years in the western governorates have had such a detrimental effect on the economic state of this region that its restoration, in the absence of free capital among private owners, becomes impossible without special measures on the part of the Government" [3, pp. 15–16].

This diagnosis—economic decline caused by the lack of nationally loyal capital—became the starting point for a complex of legislative initiatives aimed not only at modernizing the agrarian sector but also at the radical transformation of the ethnoconfessional composition of landowners.

The Peasant Reform of 1861 formally extended to these governorates, but its implementation in the Western Krai had a fundamentally different nature compared to the central governorates. Due to the 1863–1864 Uprising, the Imperial Government abandoned the voluntary redemption mechanism and instead introduced a mandatory non-redemption redemption of serf obligations, combined with direct confiscatory pressure on the Polish nobility (shliakhta).

Thus, the Regulation of March 5, 1864, directly stipulated that "persons of Polish origin who own immovable property" were allowed to act in matters of selling confiscated holdings only as sellers, not as buyers [3, p. 7]. Concurrently, according to Article 3 of the same document, all confiscated holdings were transferred under the direct control of the Ministry of State Property (Ministerstvo gosudarstvennykh imushchestv), which ruled out the possibility of their restitution or voluntary transfer between Polish families.

The final legal boundary was established by the Imperial Decree (Vysochayshy Ukaz) of December 10, 1865, which introduced a general ban on the acquisition of "noble estates" by persons of Polish origin in the nine Western Governorates.

According to the text of the decree, this precautionary measure was intended to remain in force "until the final arrangement of the Western Krai, through the sufficient strengthening of the number of Russian landowners within

it" [2, p. 63]. Thus, the national criterion ("not of Polish origin") became legally binding for any acquisition of noble land—even in cases of inheritance or donation.

Importantly, the same Article of the December 10, 1865, decree provided for a two-year deferral for owners exiled from the region: they had the right to sell or exchange their holdings exclusively in favor of "persons of Russian origin, of the Orthodox and Protestant faiths" [2, p. 63]. This essentially transformed confiscation from a punitive act into an instrument of forced, yet formally voluntary, land redistribution.

Regarding the legal interpretation of the term "Polish origin" itself, it possessed not an ethnic but a political-ideological nature. Thus, according to a special clarification issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs on October 23, 1867, "persons of Russian origin" (*russkoye proiskhozhdenie*) included, among others, natives of the Baltic Governorates, despite their German language and Lutheran faith [2, pp. 56–57].

Concurrently, according to the Imperial Command (*Vysochayshy poveleniem*) of June 14, 1868, Russian men married to Polish women did not lose the right to purchase land [2, pp. 57–58]. Moreover, on June 14, 1868, it was explicitly confirmed that Catholic peasants—native inhabitants of the region—did not fall into the category of the "Polish element" and retained the right to purchase land [2, pp. 60–61].

Thus, legislation deliberately separated the conservative, "rebellious" noble elite from the local peasantry even despite a shared confession, emphasizing: the policy's goal was not to "Russify the faith" but to redistribute land ownership in favor of the middle class loyal to the Empire, which could be Catholic or Lutheran.

The system of land ownership that operated in the Russian Empire until the late 1860s traditionally distinguished four main legal categories: noble (*pomeshchich'i*) (private property of the nobility), peasant (transferred through

rural societies/communes), state-owned (kazennye) (government-owned), and appanage (udel'nye) (reserved for members of the imperial family) [31, pp. 776–803].

However, in the Western Governorates (which encompassed the lands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth), this classical system was fundamentally restructured after the suppression of the 1863–1864 Uprising. The new land relations were subordinated not so much to purely economic rationality as to the national and confessional strategy of the Imperial Government, aimed at weakening the local Polish nobility (shliakhta) and strengthening the "Russian element".

The central element of this restructuring became the category of state-owned lands (kazennye zemli), which in the Western Krai acquired a complex, multi-component structure, uniting lands of various legal origins: purely state-owned (belonging to the Department of State Lands and Forests), post-Jesuit lands (confiscated in 1773 and transferred to state administration [32, pp. 77–90]), and also fief lands (Lenní zemli) (Polish estates that formally remained the property of the nobility but were subject to a "fief duty" (lenny sbor) and only passed into free ownership after its redemption [32, pp. 77–90]).

Furthermore, appanage lands (udel'nye zemli), present in small quantities, were under the direct control of the Ministry of Appanages. The key transformation occurred with the implementation of the State Peasant Reform of 1866, carried out on the basis of the Imperial Decree of May 16, 1867, on the land arrangement of state peasants in the nine Western Governorates.

Unlike the central governorates, where state peasants were transferred to free ownership through redemption payments, in the Western Krai, the allocation of allotments was mandatory but carried out without redemption. According to the decree, the granted lands were considered allotments belonging to rural societies, and crucially, they "could not be objects of private sale or testament" [4, p. 202].

This decision had a dual strategic effect: firstly, it isolated peasant allotments from market circulation, which prevented their potential consolidation by the "Polish element" (given the significant percentage of Catholics among state peasants); secondly, it substantially increased the volume of "free state-owned lands", since the allotment process left unused areas and lands unsuitable for distribution (forests, swamps, peat bogs), which reverted to the Treasury's administration.

It was precisely this fund of free state-owned lands that became the basis for the implementation of the policy of «strengthening the Russian element») — as explicitly stated by the Instruction of July 23, 1865, dedicating these lands for sale without auction exclusively to persons of Russian origin [1, p. 25].

Thus, land property in the Western Governorates was deliberately removed from the operation of universal economic laws and transformed into a direct instrument of the empire's ethno-confessional policy. According to the 1887 Land Statistics, state peasants accounted for 4.2 million desiatins, landowners for 3.9 million desiatins, while state-owned lands amounted to 0.8 million desiatins, or about 9% of the entire arable fund of the region, which confirms the significant role of the state as a landowner in this region [13, pp. 5–7].

To regularize the process of selling state-owned lands, the Tsarist government issued the "Instruction on the Procedure for the Sale of State-Owned Lands in the Western Governorates to Persons of Russian Origin Serving in That Krai or Wishing to Settle There Permanently" in July 1865 [1].

This document was notable for its exceptional form and functional designation within the imperial legislative system. Unlike public "Regulations" (Polozheniya) intended for general awareness, it was structured as an official regulatory and instructional act, addressed exclusively to local administrative bodies—the Chambers of State Property (Palaty Gosudarstvennogo Imushchestva), governor-generals, and the Department of State Lands under the

Ministry of State Property (Ministerstvo gosudarstvennykh imushchestv) [1, pp. 21–22].

This confidential form was chosen deliberately: as noted in the Journal of the Committee of Ministers of July 13, 1865, "these rules should not be subject to publication... it is more convenient to set them out not in the form of a Regulation, but in the form of an Instruction" [1, p. 22]. This allowed for maximum detailing of procedural mechanisms, avoidance of political reaction from the local population, and preservation of flexibility in execution, without burdening the document with the formal requirements of generally binding legislative acts.

Structurally, the Instruction consisted of nine sections, each of which regulated a specific element of the land fund redistribution mechanism while simultaneously forming a unified system of administrative control. The main goal was formulated already in the first article: "to encourage officials of Russian origin... to continue service there, and other reliable persons, also of Russian origin, to reside permanently in that Krai" [1, p. 24].

Furthermore, the sale was to take place without public auctions, exclusively to persons who met the national-political criterion, and concerned only "state-owned lands, farms, and others... free after allotment to state peasants," as well as urban real estate that had been transferred to the Treasury as a result of confiscations or other administrative procedures [1, p. 24].

A key stage was the formation of land plots, which was subject to strict centralized regulation. According to Article 2, free state-owned lands and confiscated estates were divided into two classes: the first—from 500 to 600 dessiatins, the second—from 600 to 1,000 dessiatins, "and under special circumstances, exceeding this size" [1, p. 25].

Furthermore, the subdivision of estates was prohibited if they contained industrial facilities, "the maintenance of which is impossible when owning a small plot separated from the estate" [1, p. 25]. Valuation was carried out based

on capitalized income: "the income calculated from the land plot... multiplied by ten, is accepted as the valuation of the property" (Art. 8), and a fixed surcharge of 10% was applied to this sum (Art. 9) [1, p. 26]. This mechanism specifically guaranteed price stability, regardless of market conditions, and transformed land policy into a predictable, state-regulated process.

The definition of the circle of permissible purchasers held a central place in the Instruction, which was of an exclusively political, rather than economic, nature. Article 10 clearly distinguished two groups: firstly—"military or civil ranks of non-Polish origin serving in the Western Governorates", secondly—"persons of Russian origin in general, who have served in natural state service or public activity and wish to settle permanently in the Western Krai" [1, pp. 26–27].

Concurrently, the requirement of "absolute political reliability" (Art. 12) was delegated to the governor-generals, which effectively transformed them into local agents of Imperial national policy [1, p. 27].

Special attention was paid to the preferential terms of acquisition, which created a hierarchy of advantages depending on the social status and political utility of the individual.

For officials, as a reward "for excellent service" (Art. 13), acquisition was provided without a down payment and with installment payments over 20 years without penalties [1, pp. 27–28].

For these same persons, if they declared the need for technical equipment for the estate, an additional two-year deferral could be obtained, although the total term increased to 22 years (Art. 14) [1, p. 28].

For other persons of "Russian origin," acting not as state employees but as voluntary settlers, significantly stricter terms were established: a mandatory advance payment of at least 1/5 of the total amount, with the remainder payable according to the "37-year order"—annually at 6% of the debt amount, with an additional 5% for the incomplete first year (Art. 15) [1, p. 28].

An important element of support was the exemption from stamp duties (gerbovye krepostnye myta) (Art. 16), which significantly reduced transaction costs [1, p. 28].

The credit system, institutionally implemented through direct cooperation with the Department of State Lands, was devoid of elements of market lending—transactions were concluded not with banks, but with the state, and their guarantee mechanism was a prohibition on the buyer's account (zaborona na rachunok pokuptsia), meaning an administrative restriction on the right to dispose of the property until the debt was fully settled (Art. 19) [1, p. 29].

Subsequently, this system was flexibly adapted: in 1868, it was allowed to settle the capital sum using "50% redemption certificates" and "5½% annuity at face value" [5, p. 49], and in 1875—instead of automatic confiscation for arrears—public auctions with the retention of the remaining proceeds for the former owner were introduced (Art. 22, 1875 edition) [6, pp. 52–53].

Sanctions and control were particularly strict. Article 26 explicitly prohibited the transfer of acquired plots to "persons of Polish origin and Jews" or leasing them to these persons; other Jews were assigned only an auxiliary role—"distillers and tavern renters" [1, p. 31].

Even in the case of inheritance, the transfer of land to descendants had to occur only with the consent of the Minister of State Property (Art. 27) [1, p. 32]. Violation of these norms led to perpetual and uncompensated confiscation: "violation of this rule entails in any case the seizure of the plot by the Treasury, without any compensation to either contracting party" (Art. 28) [1, p. 32].

According to the circular order of the Ministry of Justice in 1872, all notaries and local judicial bodies were made "aware" of these restrictions and obligated to monitor their compliance [9, pp. 66–67].

Overall, the Instruction of July 23, 1865, was not merely a land regulation but a complex administrative and political instrument, in which fiscal, economic, credit, and control mechanisms were rigidly subordinated to a single goal—

"strengthening the number of Russian landowners in that Krai" [2, p. 63]. It transformed state-owned land not into a commodity, but into a resource of political legitimacy, providing the authorities with a tool for the direct formation of a new social base loyal to the Imperial regime.

And although the Regulation of March 5, 1864, formally approved by the Emperor, explained the purpose of the measures in the Western Krai as "restoring the economic condition of the region," stating that "its restoration... becomes impossible without special measures on the part of the Government" [3, p. 16], the real goals of state policy proved to be significantly deeper and politically charged.

In the Journal of the Special Commission of 1865, established to develop measures for "strengthening the Russian element," it was directly stated that "this population, consisting mostly of landowners and burghers, gives the entire Krai a Polish character and prevents other, somewhat non-Polish populations, from developing properly... and that the power of this class lies in the corporate indebtedness of immovable property ownership" [3, pp. 59–60]. This understanding of Polish dominance as a systemic threat to the national security of the Empire formed the basis for four interrelated, yet hierarchically ordered goals.

The Fiscal Goal was not merely to raise funds but to create a self-sustaining mechanism of state financing. According to Article 28 of the Regulation of March 5, 1864, "the capital for issuing loans consists of the price of state-owned estates and lease articles designated for this purpose"; furthermore, Article 42 specified that the funds received "are forwarded from the Treasuries, for circulation at 3% in the State Bank" [3, pp. 12, 16].

Thus, the financial flow followed a closed loop: sale of state-owned lands → growth of the loan fund → ending to new loyal buyers → receipt of payments → replenishment of the fund. This transformed land from an object of economic

use into an instrument of fiscal control, where every act of property transfer strengthened not only the new owner but also the state budget.

The Social Support Goal (Sotsial'no-opornaya Tsel') consisted in forming a stratum of landowners who would lack historical roots in the local structure but would be dependent on the state. The average size of the plots (200–1,000 dessiatins) [1, p. 25] differed fundamentally from the scale of Polish estates (often exceeding 2,000–5,000 dessiatins) and was significantly larger than a peasant allotment (~10 dessiatins) [4, p. 202].

This "middle level" was deliberate: the estates had to be large enough to conduct rational farming but too small to establish an autonomous political force. In 1867, additional categories were introduced: plots "from 50 to 300 dessiatins" for officials and "from 20 to 50 dessiatins" for school tutors and volost clerks (volostnye pisari) [7, p. 38]. Thus, land was transformed into a material equivalent of state service—not a reward, but an institutionally guaranteed resource that bound the individual to the regime for life.

The Colonization Goal was formulated in sources as "the introduction of the Russian element"—the official term which first appeared in the Instruction of July 23, 1865 [1, p. 24]. The key element was that "origin" was interpreted not ethnographically or confessionally, but politically and administratively.

Already in 1867, it was confirmed that "natives of the Baltic Governorates" were included in "Russian origin" (russkoye proiskhozhdenie), although they "do not speak Russian and profess Lutheranism" [8, p. 56]; in 1868, "Tatar nobles who had adopted Russian citizenship" were included [8, pp. 58–59]. Furthermore, in 1868, it was recognized that a Russian man married to a Polish woman retained the right to purchase land [8, pp. 57–58], and in 1867— that local Catholic peasants not involved in the "uprising" were also considered the "non-Polish element" [8, pp. 60–61].

Therefore, the criterion was not language or faith, but the absence of ties to the noble opposition. This was not an ethnic project, but a project of state

loyalty, in which identity was determined not by origin, but by affiliation with a political group chosen by the authorities.

The National-Political (Russification) Goal was realized not through forced assimilation, but through the systemic displacement of the competing elite. Already the Imperial Decree of December 10, 1865, forbade "persons of Polish origin from newly acquiring noble estates" in the nine Western Governorates; furthermore, only a single transfer of property (sale or exchange) was allowed within a two-year period following confiscation [2, pp. 62–63].

But even this restriction was later more strictly interpreted: the Circular of the Ministry of Justice of May 3, 1872, stated that any contract that "directly or indirectly... could transfer the right of ownership to a person of Polish origin" was considered invalid [9, p. 66]; the Decree of the Governing Senate of May 17, 1877, explicitly indicated that the inheritance of estates by the Polish nobility was allowed only through direct succession (children), not collateral [10, pp. 67–70].

Thus, Imperial policy focused not on "changing language," but on redistributing land power, since, as noted in the explanation to the Regulation of 1864, "the power of this class lies in the corporate indebtedness of immovable property ownership" [3, p. 59]. Land, therefore, was not only an economic resource but a carrier of power—and control over it became the main condition for the national security of the Empire.

The key element of the policy was the selection of a social base that lacked a foundation in the local structure but was prepared to implement the Imperial order. Unlike the Polish tradition, where land served as a symbol of aristocratic honor and autonomy, the Imperial model transformed it into a reward for service, whether civil or military. As stated in the explanatory note to the Regulation of March 5, 1864, "in the absence of free capital among private owners, the restoration of the economy becomes impossible without special measures on the part of the Government" [3, p. 16]. Therefore, instead of capitalists, who did not

exist in the region, the authorities chose the service class—those who were already institutionally linked to the regime.

Officials received the highest preferences as "local agents of authority." According to Article 13 of the Instruction, "persons rewarded for excellent service... are allowed to acquire plots without a down payment, with the payment of the entire purchase price over 20 years, without penalties" [1, pp. 27–28]. Furthermore, according to Article 12, "plots exceeding 600 dessiatins are granted preferentially to those persons whose influence in the Krai may be beneficial" [1, p. 27].

This meant that administrators holding state positions simultaneously became landowners—which strengthened dual control: the state gained social support, and the official gained a material base for long-term settlement. Such a mechanism ensured stability of governance, as the official was no longer a "temporary appointee" but became an indigenous element of the local structure.

Retired military personnel who participated in the suppression of the 1863–1864 Uprising also belonged to the priority purchasers. Although "military personnel" were not directly mentioned in the Instruction, Article 10 referred to "military ranks of non-Polish origin serving in the Western Governorates," and among those who "wish to settle... permanently"—"persons who appeared in the Krai after 1863" [1, p. 26].

Since military and police personnel were massively deployed in the Krai after the uprising, this phrasing covered them specifically. They were strategically placed—in areas with a high concentration of Polish nobility, around administrative centers (e.g., Vilna, Grodno, Minsk), and railway hubs. These estates served not only an economic but also a defensive function, creating "belts of loyalty" around potential centers of resistance.

Petty nobility from the central governorates had fewer preferences but significant freedom of action. For them, it was stipulated that "no less than 1/5 of

the purchase sum is paid once, and the rest is extended over 37 years" (i.e., under the "mortgage order") [1, p. 28].

The absence of down-payment-free acquisition and the long repayment term made such purchases risky, which naturally filtered out passive or unconvinced candidates. Thus, only those who were prepared to personally invest in the Imperial project were admitted to participation—and thereby became dependent on the state for longer than the Polish nobility was on tradition.

The attitude towards Jews deserves special attention. They were completely excluded from the right to acquire land and manage estates, with the exception of "taverns and distilleries" [1, pp. 24, 31]. Only in the Regulation of December 8, 1867, were they allowed to become "managers of mills and factories" when "replacing them with another person is impossible" [33, pp. 42–43].

This indicates that the policy was not religious or racial, but strategic: Jews were used as an instrument when they were functionally indispensable, but were not permitted to own land—because, according to the state's understanding, land ownership was the foundation of political subjectivity.

Thus, state-owned lands became not merely an object of privatization, but the material foundation of a new social support for Imperial power—a stratum that lacked historical roots in the Krai but was created by the state artificially, instrumentally, to ensure its longevity and loyalty. In this system, land ceased to be merely an economic resource—it became a carrier of power, and its transfer—an act of political engineering.

The fundamental source base for evaluating the consequences of land transformation in the region consists of the official materials of the Central Statistical Committee, specifically the "Land Statistics of the Empire across 80 Governorates for 1887" ("Pozezel'naya statistika Imperii po 80 guberniyam k" 1887 g. ").

According to these data, the total land fund suitable for economic use (so-called convenient land) within the nine Western Governorates—Vilna, Kovno, Grodno, Minsk, Vitebsk, Mogilev, Kyiv, Podolia, and Volhynia—amounted to 8,987,000 dessiatins [13, pp. 124–131].

The distribution of this land mass by forms of ownership reflects the specificity of the region's socioeconomic structure that emerged as a result of the Imperial reforms.

Table 1

The structure of land ownership by forms of property was distributed as follows

Form of Ownership	Area, thousand dessiatins	% of Total Fund
Peasant Communal Allotments	4 237	47.1%
Landowners' Estates	3 892	43.3%
State-Owned Lands (<i>Kazennye Zemli</i>)	798	8.9%
Appanage Lands (<i>Udel'nye Zemli</i>)	37	0.4%
Urban Lands	18	0.2%
Monastery and Church Lands	5	0.1%
Total	8 987	100%

Source: [13, pp. 126–127]

A detailed analysis of the presented indicators reveals important structural features hidden behind the general figures. Specifically, the category of state-owned lands (*kazennye zemli*), which accounted for 8.9% (798 thousand dessiatins), had a specific composition: it did not include those confiscated Polish estates that had already been sold or transferred to the management of the Chambers of State Property by the time of the census.

This fund was primarily formed from lands remaining undistributed after the allotment to state peasants according to the Imperial Decree of May 16, 1867,

as well as from economic objects (farms, taverns, distilleries, forest lands, mines) and urban real estate that passed to the Treasury as a result of political confiscations [4, p. 202].

It is indicative that out of nearly 800 thousand dessiatins of state-owned land in 1887, only 61,200 dessiatins (or 7.7%) were allocated for preferential sale to persons of Russian origin under the Instruction of July 23, 1865, which suggests the state's restraint in alienating the strategic land reserve [18, p. 152].

The analysis of land ownership dynamics in the nine Western Governorates during 1877–1887 confirms significant structural shifts, which were the result of deliberate Imperial policy. Specifically, the share of state-owned lands in the region decreased from 12.3% to 8.9%, which in absolute terms represented a reduction of 300 thousand dessiatins.

However, this process was not merely fiscal but had a distinctly politically-selective nature, aimed at changing the ethnic composition of landowners. The implementation of this task relied on the regulatory framework established by the Instruction of July 23, 1865, according to which state plots were alienated without auctions, at a fixed price (calculated as annual income $\times 10 + 10\%$), under the conditions of a preferential installment plan of up to 37 years and exemption from stamp duties [11, pp. 26–28].

At the same time, the state demonstrated interest in the stability of the newly created layer of owners: the Regulation of 1875 softened sanctions for payment arrears, replacing automatic confiscation with public auctions while retaining the remainder of the funds for the former owner [6, pp. 52–53]. This indicated the authorities' attempt to keep the new landowners within the system even in cases of their financial insolvency.

It is important to note that a significant part of the "free state-owned lands" fund was formed not so much through new state acquisitions as a result of the process of allotting land to state peasants according to the Imperial Decree of May

16, 1867, when surplus, undistributed lands remained at the disposal of the Treasury [4, p. 202].

It was precisely these accumulated plots that were subsequently transferred to "persons of Russian origin," transforming state ownership into a kind of bridge between the state peasantry and the new service landownership.

In parallel with the sale of state-owned lands, there was a massive reduction in landowners' estates, whose share decreased from 47.1% to 43.3% (by 340 thousand dessiatins), which even exceeded the volume of privatized state plots.

This discrepancy is explained by the mechanism of debt confiscations, which became an instrument of pressure on the Polish landowners. In the event of the owner's bankruptcy, their estate was transferred to the disposal of the Chamber of State Property and, according to Article 26 of the Instruction, could be alienated without auction to a person "whose influence in the Krai may be expected to be substantially beneficial" [1, p. 31].

The administrative, rather than market-driven, nature of this redistribution was cemented by the Circular of the Ministry of Justice of May 3, 1872, which declared invalid any contract that directly or indirectly transferred the right of ownership to "a person of Polish origin" [9, p. 66].

This process gained the greatest intensity between 1872 and 1878, when the number of latifundia over 2,000 dessiatins decreased by 32% (from 1,143 to 776), implementing in practice the directive of the Imperial Decree of December 10, 1865, regarding strengthening the "number of Russian landowners" [2, p. 63; 18, p. 141].

The consequence of this policy was the de-concentration of land ownership and the formation of a loyal "middle class." The share of estates sized 200–1,000 dessiatins increased from 21% to 34%, which was ensured, inter alia, by the norms of the Regulation of March 24, 1867, which reserved plots of 50–300

dessiatins for officials, and 20–50 dessiatins for volost clerks and school tutors [7, p. 38].

This approach created a disparity between the legal form and the economic essence of ownership: formally independent owners, due to debt obligations and the prohibition of free resale to Polish subjects, de facto remained administratively dependent on the state.

The economic reaction to these artificial restrictions was the rapid spread of leasing, which became the main mechanism of economic adaptation. While in 1877, 33.6% of landowners' lands were leased, by 1887, this figure reached 42.8%, and in the Right-Bank Ukraine (Podolia and Volhynia Governorates), it exceeded 50% [18, p. 142].

This phenomenon was caused by the convergence of two factors: Polish landowners, deprived of access to mortgage lending due to political "unreliability," were forced to lease land to cover debts (with peasant redemption payments often automatically credited towards the landowner's arrears [Art. 8, p. 22]), while new Russian owners, often lacking capital or being absentees, leased the acquired plots on short-term leases, limited to 12 years [34, p. 77].

It is worth noting the regional differentiation of these processes. The deepest changes occurred in the Southwestern Governorates, where mass participation in the 1863–1864 Uprising triggered a wave of confiscations, and specific rules (based on the 1847 inventories) allowed the boundary of lands to be challenged in favour of the peasants [Art. 3, p. 118]. In contrast, in the Northwestern Governorates, the pace of transformation was slower: the reduction of large estates was only 19%, and the share of leased land was significantly lower.

Thus, the decade 1877–1887 became a stage of institutional consolidation of the policy of "establishing the Russian element," where economic expediency was deliberately subordinated to the tasks of Imperial security and administrative control.

The system of land ownership in the Russian Empire in the late 1860s formally distinguished four main categories: landowners' estates, peasant lands (via rural communities), state-owned (kazennye), and appanage lands [31]. However, in the Western Governorates (which included the lands of Vilna, Kovno, Grodno, Minsk, Vitebsk, Mogilev, Kyiv, Podolia, and Volhynia provinces), this classic model was fundamentally restructured after the 1863–1864 uprising, subordinating itself not to economic logic but to the national and confessional strategy of the Imperial government, aimed at weakening the Polish element and strengthening the "Russian character of the Krai."

The central element of this restructuring was the category of state-owned lands, which here acquired a complex, multi-layered structure, combining purely state, post-Jesuit, as well as benefice lands (lennye zemli) that were under a special regime [32, pp. 77–94].

A key point that shaped the region's specificity was the state peasant reform of 1866, implemented by the Imperial Decree of May 16, 1867, on land tenure. Unlike the central governorates, where peasants acquired free ownership through redemption, in the Western Krai, the allotment was mandatory but without redemption, and the allotments themselves, according to the decree, "cannot be the object of private purchase-sale or testament" [4, p. 202].

This decision had a dual effect: it prevented the consolidation of land masses by the peasantry (which included a significant Catholic element) and simultaneously increased the fund of "free state-owned lands" due to unused areas during the distribution. It was precisely these lands that became the basis for the policy of "establishing the Russian element," as the Instruction of July 23, 1865, directly designated them for sale without auction to persons of Russian origin [1, p. 25].

A quantitative analysis of the land fund structure, based on the official data of the "Land Statistics of the Empire across 80 Governorates in 1887," reveals a deep divergence from the general Imperial model. The total fund of economically

useful lands in the region amounted to 8,987 thousand dessiatins [13, pp. 124–131]. The structure of land ownership during this period showed: peasant allotments (47.1%) and landowners' estates (43.3%) occupied almost equal shares, while state-owned lands accounted for 8.9% (798 thousand dessiatins) [1, pp. 126–127].

This structure was artificially constructed. The share of landowners' lands (43.3%) was the highest after the Baltic Governorates [18, p. 153], but, unlike the stable Baltic model, here it was temporary, caused by massive confiscatory pressure. The share of landowners' lands decreased by 340 thousand dessiatins over a decade, which was caused not by market sales, but by administrative confiscation for debts.

Estates of bankrupts were transferred to the Chamber of State Property and sold without auction to a person "whose influence in the Krai may be expected to be substantially beneficial" [1, p. 31], with the Circular of the Ministry of Justice of 1872 explicitly prohibiting any transfer of ownership to "a person of Polish origin" [9, p. 66].

Concurrently, state-owned lands, which decreased from 12.3% to 8.9% (by 27.2% over 10 years versus 14.5% across the Empire) [9, p. 140], were used as a reserve for political maneuvering. The sale of these plots was carried out without auction, at a fixed preferential price, with installment payments up to 37 years [1, pp. 26–28].

Thus, de-concentration of ownership occurred: large estates were reduced in favor of plots of 200–1,000 dessiatins (whose share grew from 21% to 34%), which created a state-controlled middle class of landowners (officials, teachers) through state selection, not market competition [7, p. 38].

The high degree of political control was also manifested in economic institutions. The share of leased landowners' lands in the region reached 42.8% (over 50% in Podolia and Volhynia) [Orlyk, p. 142]. This phenomenon was not a result of capitalist modernization, but a function of administrative control: the

Polish nobility, deprived of access to credit, was forced to lease land to cover debts, with the state acting as a "compulsory administrator," crediting peasant redemption payments toward the landowner's debt settlement [12, p. 22].

Credit policy was also subject to ethno-social filtration. The right to acquire land and preferential loans was valid only for "persons of Russian origin," whose definition was expanded by the administration depending on political loyalty (including German-speaking Lutherans of the Baltic States, loyal Tatar nobles, etc.) [8, pp. 56–61]. Moreover, land prices were deliberately adjusted for political reasons: the lower land value in Volhynia Governorate (154 rub./dessiatins) compared to the black soil of Podolia (236 rub./desyatin) [18, p. 309] was the result of a targeted price reduction to accelerate the "establishment of the Russian element" in areas of the highest confiscations.

Even the peasant redemption of land in the Western Krai was not so much a legal as an administrative-regulatory procedure. Unlike the general Imperial model of the redemption mortgage, here, due to the lack of peasant capital, the Gubernia Presence (Gubernskoye Prisutstviye) could reduce redemption payments, and in case of disputes over boundaries or lessee monopolies, intervention was carried out exclusively at the level of the Governor-General, bypassing judicial bodies [11, p. 112; pp. 115–116].

Table 2

Specifics of land ownership in the Western Governorates compared to average Imperial indicators (1887)

Indicator	Average across the Empire (1887)	Western Governorates (1887)	Deviation, %
Share of Landowners' Lands (Share of land owned by landlords)	35.1%	43.3%	+23.4%

Indicator	Average across the Empire (1887)	Western Governorates (1887)	Deviation, %
Share of State-Owned Lands (<i>Share of state-owned land</i>)	12.4%	8.9%	–28.2%
Rate of decrease in State-Owned Lands (1877–1887) (<i>Rate of decline in state-owned land</i>)	–14.5%	–27.2%	–87.6%
Leasing of Landowners' Lands (<i>Leasing of landowners' lands</i>)	29.3%	42.8%	+46.1%
Average Estate Size (dessiatins) (<i>Average size of estate, des.</i>)	1,842	1,206	–34.5%
Share of estates > 2000 dessiatins (<i>Share of estates > 2000 dessiatines.</i>)	27.1%	19.0%	–29.9%
Share of estates 200–1000 dessiatins (<i>Share of estates 200–1000 des.</i>)	28.3%	34.0%	+20.1%

Source: calculated based on [13.; 18, pp. 140, 152–153]

The data presented prove that the Western Governorates in the 1860s–1880s acted not as a periphery, but as an experimental zone of the Empire. Traditional economic institutions—private property, leasing, credit—were here subordinated to a single goal: the institutional, and not merely cultural, Russification of the Krai. The government's policy was aimed not at maintaining the status quo, but at the active transformation of the ownership structure, where "corporate indebtedness of immovable property ownership" [2, p. 63] was viewed as the main lever of Imperial power.

Thus, the decade 1877–1887 became not just a period of quantitative redistribution, but a stage of institutional consolidation of the Imperial project.

The Western Governorates functioned as an experimental zone where economic rationality consciously yielded to political stability, and every act of land transfer—sale, lease, redemption, confiscation—acquired the meaning of institutional Russification, as the strength of the "Polish element" was seen in its "corporate indebtedness of immovable property ownership" [2, p. 63].

The assessment of the effectiveness of state policy must be based not on subjective judgments, but on comparing the formal goals laid down in the regulatory document with the actual results recorded in state statistics. In this sense, the Instruction of July 23, 1865, is an extremely convenient object of analysis, since in Article 1 it clearly declares the goal: "to encourage officials of Russian origin serving in the Western Governorates to continue their service there, and other reliable persons, also of Russian origin, to establish themselves permanently in that Krai" [1, p. 24].

Thus, the policy was formally aimed at achieving three interconnected dimensions: social (support for the service class), colonization (settlement of "loyal" persons), and national-political ("establishment of the Russian element").

Upon considering the Social Goal, the Instruction offered decorated officials extremely liberal terms: down-payment-free purchase, 20-year installment plans without penalties, and the possibility of an additional two-year deferral [1, pp. 27–28]. However, in practice, this mechanism proved to be limited in effectiveness. As of 1887, only 61,200 dessiatins (a meager 0.7% of the region's entire land fund) were sold under the preferential terms of the Instruction, indicating the absence of a massive flow of land applications [18, p. 152].

Furthermore, it became evident by the 1870s that the "shortage of free capital among private owners" [3, p. 16] applied not only to the Polish nobility but also to the newly appointed Russian officials. Consequently, many of them were forced to lease out the acquired lands [12, p. 22]. This suggests that the social goal was partially achieved: the Instruction created a stratum of

administrator-owners who received a new material base and source of income, but failed to ensure the formation of a class of active farmer-landowners.

The Colonization Goal was also effectively nullified. For "other reliable persons," the Instruction stipulated stricter terms (1/5 down payment, 37-year installment plan), but the overall result—the sale of only 61,200 dessiatins over 22 years—proves that a mass "resettlement" of new settlers did not occur.

The land redistribution statistics for 1877–1887 show that the dominant factor was not the influx of new persons, but internal transformation: landowners' lands decreased by 340 thousand dessiatins, while peasant allotments increased by 630 thousand dessiatins [18, pp. 152–153]. This means that the main volume of redistribution occurred through the redemption of lands by the local peasantry, a process regulated by separate acts (for example, permission to receive a loan up to 1/3 of the assessed amount [12, p. 21]).

Thus, instead of attracting a large number of new "Russian" persons, the authorities were forced to rely on the existing local peasantry, which, although not "Polish," often did not correspond to the official ideological definition of the "Russian element."

In contrast, in the dimension of the National-Political Goal, the results were the most unambiguous and successful. The main mechanism here lay not in the sale of state-owned lands, but in the institutional restriction of the rights of the Polish nobility—not only on the purchase of new lands (Decree of December 10, 1865) but also on inheritance, which, starting from 1877, was allowed exclusively through the direct line [10, p. 68].

These consistent measures led to significant de-concentration: the share of estates over 2,000 dessiatins decreased by one-third (from 28% to 19%), while the share of plots 200–1,000 dessiatins increased from 21% to 34% [18, p. 141]. Furthermore, the leasing rate in the landowners' sector reached 42.8% (over 54% in Volhynia and Podolia) [18, p. 142].

This high figure meant that the Polish elite, even while retaining formal ownership, gradually lost operational control over farming, transforming into "absentee owners." This was sufficient to consider the national-political goal to have been achieved most fully: it destroyed the Polish nobility as a consolidated political force through institutional displacement and the undermining of its economic basis.

Thus, the effectiveness of the Instruction of July 23, 1865, proved to be asymmetrical: it achieved only partial success in the social dimension (creating a stratum of dependent owners) and failed in the colonization dimension, as mass resettlement was replaced by local peasant redemption. However, it ensured strategic success in the national-political dimension, ultimately undermining the economic and political influence of the Polish elite.

This confirms the key thesis: The Instruction was not an economic, but a political act, whose effectiveness was to be judged not by the thousands of dessiatins sold, but by the degree of weakening of the competing elite. Land, which was the carrier of power, passed under the control of subjects loyal to the Empire through institutional restrictions and administrative pressure, which constituted the main function of this regulatory document.

Although the Instruction of July 23, 1865, was formally aimed at regulating the alienation of state-owned estates in favor of "persons of Russian origin," its indirect impact on the peasant sector was systemic. The policy regarding state-owned lands was integrated into a single state strategy that was synchronized with the confiscations of landowners' estates, changes in the statutory deeds (*ustavnye gramoty*), and the reform of redemption payments.

This impact was decisive and manifested itself in three key directions: the institutional consolidation of peasant allotments, the deepening of land shortage (*malozemel'ye*), and the transformation of lease relations into the sphere of administrative-fiscal control.

Following the Imperial Decree of May 16, 1867, peasant allotments in the Western Governorates passed into the perpetual use of rural communities under the terms of mandatory, non-redemption purchase, which fundamentally differed from the 49-year redemption period in the central governorates [4, p. 202]. This meant the institutional withdrawal of peasant land from market circulation, as resale, division, and alienation were prohibited: "lands granted to state peasants for perpetual use are considered allotments belonging to rural societies" [4, p. 202].

Paradoxically, it was precisely in this "non-market" sector that the largest increase in area was observed—by 630 thousand dessiatins during 1877–1887 [18, p. 152]. The source of this increase was not new redemption agreements, but the targeted redistribution of confiscated landowners' lands, which were allotted to peasants through the Treasury.

According to "On the procedure for handling landowners' estates..." ("O poryadke obrashcheniya po pomeshchich'im imeniyam..."), in cases of disputes over the boundaries of communal land, the Peasant Assembly (Mirovoy S'ezd) was obliged "to issue a conclusion on compensating the peasants by adding land to their allotment" [11, p. 115]. This was not a voluntary transfer, but the administrative restoration of historical allotments based on the 1847–1848 inventories—a mechanism that operated parallel to the 1865 Instruction but served the opposite function: while the Instruction created new private owners, this mechanism preserved the peasantry in a collective communal form.

Thus, peasant land ownership was institutionally stabilized, but this formal security was combined with increasing economic dependence caused by land shortage (*malozemel'ye*).

Despite the overall increase in the volume of peasant lands, the average allotment in 1887 remained critically low—about 10 dessiatins per capita, which was significantly less than in the central governorates [18, p. 153]. The reason for this was the deliberate limitation of the boundaries of communal land, fixed

already at the stage of the 1840s inventory and the subsequent normative application of this standard.

According to "On the payment of redemption payments..." ("O vnzose vykupnykh platezhey..."), "the boundaries of communal land are determined... in accordance with the actual land use by peasants in 1847" [12, p. 114]. That is, the baseline was data collected after the 1830–1831 uprising, when landowners' pressure led to a reduction in peasant allotments. Moreover, the Decree of August 10, 1864, rejected any claims based on historical rights from the pre-inventory period [11, p. 114].

The consequence of this was systemic land shortage (*malozemel'ye*): for example, in Volhynia Governorate, 68%, and in Podolia, 61% of peasant households owned less than 6 *dessiatins* [18, p. 154]. This economic hardship made the peasants objectively dependent on leasing, often from the same landowners who, although losing political influence, retained ownership until the full repayment of debts.

Lease relations in the Western Governorates acquired a dual, non-market character: on the one hand, they resulted from economic compulsion (land shortage and debts), and on the other, they were an instrument of state regulation and control. In estates where "working on landowners' lands appears to be almost the only way... to properly fulfill obligations," a monopoly of lessees emerged, which threatened fiscal stability [12, p. 116].

Administrative intervention was implemented through the mechanism of debt crisis management. The Gubernia Presences had the right to reduce redemption payments by 15–20% in case of "insolvency" of the peasants, and in case of excessive pressure—by over 20% (with mandatory approval from the Ministry of Internal Affairs) [11, p. 115]. This was not social assistance, but prophylaxis against mass debt crises that could destabilize the redemption system.

The fiscal function of leasing was particularly important: "payments received by the district treasuries from peasants..." could "be credited towards the

payment of scheduled contributions for landowners' debts" [12, p. 22]. Thus, the state transformed mandatory peasant payments into credit resources for landowners, who subsequently transferred part of the profit (in the form of lease payments) back to the peasants. This created a closed cycle of dependence, where leasing was not a market agreement, but an administrative-fiscal procedure that ensured the stability of the system.

Therefore, the policy regarding state-owned lands and the associated mechanisms did not improve the economic situation of the peasantry, but systematically entrenched its marginal status. Peasant land ownership was institutionally "frozen," land shortage was legitimized by the historical norms of 1847, and leasing was transformed into a mechanism for managing financial risks. This was a reform carried out not for the peasants, but through the peasants, who became a buffer zone between the new "Russian" landowners and the old Polish elite. The effectiveness of this policy should be judged not by the criteria of social justice, but by the degree of institutional stability, in which it achieved its goal: the peasant sector remained passive, and the authorities remained in control.

In the second half of the 19th century, state-owned lands in the Western Governorates served not only a fiscal or economic function, but also a socio-transformational one: they became an instrument for the purposeful restructuring of the landowning class structure, aimed at replacing the politically unreliable Polish nobility with a new stratum formed not by historical right, but by administrative selection.

This transformation had three key dimensions: elite (new upper layer), middle (service class), and local-integration (latent inclusion of some groups of the local population).

According to the named Imperial Decree of December 10, 1865, "henceforth... persons of Polish origin may not acquire landowners' estates"—and this restriction "remains in effect until the final arrangement of the Western Krai,

through a sufficient strengthening of the number of Russian landowners therein" [2, p. 63]. That is, the state did not merely confiscate estates, but prevented their return to the former social bearers.

As a result, according to Orlyk's data, by 1887, the share of estates over 2,000 dessiatins decreased from 28% to 19%, and the share of estates sized 200–1,000 dessiatins increased from 21% to 34% [18, p. 141]. This was not spontaneous de-concentration, but elite substitution: large estates that could not be divided without destroying the economy ("factories, significant plants... whose maintenance is impossible when owning a small plot separated from the estate" [1, p. 25]) were transferred not to new industrialists, but to official-managers who often remained "absentee owners"—while serving in other governorates, they leased the estates.

Thus, the new elite did not become an active economic force, as demanded by economist-modernizers (e.g., M. Bunge), but transformed into an administratively dependent stratum, for whom land was not a means of production, but a guarantee of social status obtained through service.

The formation of a "service-landowning class" became the core of the new social structure. For officials, military personnel, and educators, the Instruction of July 23, 1865, stipulated unique preferential terms: down-payment-free purchase, long-term installment payments for 20–22 years, tax exemption, and priority in selecting the best plots (50–300 dessiatins—"exclusively for reliable officials serving in the Western Krai" [7, p. 38]).

These conditions transformed land not into a commodity, but into a materialized right to service, confirming the policy's goal: "to encourage officials... to continue their service there" [3, p. 16]. This model ensured, above all, political loyalty, not economic rationality.

The differentiated approach to the local population was extremely important, demonstrating how origin was interpreted as political allegiance. The state did not exclude local groups from the right of ownership but introduced a

political filter of loyalty. Already in 1867, it was confirmed that "the Catholic faith is not an obstacle to land acquisition" if the person did not belong to the "Polish element" [8, p. 60]. Even "Tatar nobles who accepted Russian citizenship" were considered "Russians by origin" [8, pp. 58–59].

The integration of local personnel was confirmed by the inclusion of volost clerks and public school tutors (often Ukrainian- or Belarusian-speaking natives) in the circle of persons entitled to receive small plots (20–50 dessiatins) [8, p. 38]. Their land acted as a local pillar of the regime.

The exclusion of Jews from the right to land ownership is also scientifically significant [1, p. 31], yet with the simultaneous permission for them to be "managers of mills and factories" [33, pp. 42–43]. This points to a strategic policy that separated functional resources (management skills) from political subjectivity (land ownership), which could not be transferred to the "unintegrated element."

Thus, state-owned lands became the material means of social engineering, based on political functionality. The transformation of the social structure of landowners in the Western Governorates consisted not in creating an economically independent landowning elite, but in forming a new type of landowner—service-based, administratively dependent, and status-loyal.

This model, despite the lack of rapid economic growth, achieved the main goal: political stabilization of the Krai by replacing the conflicting element (the Polish nobility) with an administrative one (the "Russian element" and its local support), where land ceased to be a symbol of honour and independence and became a direct instrument of power.

Conclusion. Thus, the analysis of the regulatory framework and statistical data covering the period 1860s–1880s allows us to conclude that state policy regarding state-owned lands in the nine Western Governorates was not a traditional land reform. It was a holistic politico-administrative project that combined fiscal, social, colonization, and national-political goals into a unified

management system. Within this system, state-owned land was transformed from an economic resource into a vehicle of political power, realized through direct administrative control rather than market mechanisms.

The identified patterns reveal the specificity of Imperial administration.

First, the policy was asymmetrical in its goals: its main purpose was not economic modernization, but the achievement of political stabilization in a region considered "dangerous" after the 1863–1864 uprising [2, pp. 62–63]. Thus, the Instruction of July 23, 1865, acted not as an economic, but as a political act, where financial mechanisms (credit, pricing, installment plans) were subordinated to a single criterion—"complete political reliability" [1, p. 27].

Second, the policy proved to be selective in its subjects: instead of massive recruitment of the "Russian element" from the central governorates, the authorities strategically relied on the local service class (officials, military personnel, educators), for whom the most liberal acquisition terms were provided (no down payment, 20-year installment plan). This transformed land into a material equivalent of service, which strengthened administrative control "on the ground" [7, p. 38].

Third, the policy was hierarchical in its mechanisms: it integrated confiscations of Polish estates with the redistribution of "free state-owned lands" remaining after the allotment of state peasants under the Imperial Decree of May 16, 1867 [3, p. 202]. This created a clear hierarchy of dependence: peasantry (restricted in land circulation) → new "middle" landowner (dependent on state credit) → landowners (displaced from real power). Moreover, leasing was transformed from an economic instrument into an administrative means of managing debt crises and fiscal control [12, p. 22].

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